

The redundancy of Fox's oratory arose, partly, at least, from an opinion or principle which Fox had adopted. He assumed that one-third of his audience was always either absent, or at dinner, or asleep ; and he therefore usually made a short resumption or epitome of his arguments for the benefit of this part of the members. So that, after speaking at great length and sometime apparently summing up as if about to conclude, whenever he saw a considerable influx of attendance he began anew, regardless of any impatience manifested on the part of those whose attention was already exhausted by long exertion.¹

Another result of the oratorical habit in Macaulay is a certain over-vehemence. The proper business of a historian is to relate what happened and explain why it happened : the business of the orator generally involves proving a case, and if he is very anxious to do so he is often inclined to be vehement and even violent. Macaulay sometimes falls into the error which he himself condemns in Fox's History of James II. ' Mr. Fox/ says Macaulay, ' winnowed and sifted his phraseology ' with great care, but was not sufficiently on his guard against those more serious improprieties of manner into which a great orator who undertakes to write history is in danger of falling. There is about the whole book a vehement, contentious, replying manner. Almost every argument is put in the form of an interrogation, an

ejaculation, or a sarcasm. The writer seems to be addressing himself to some imaginary audience, to be tearing to pieces a defence of the Stuarts which has just been pronounced by an imaginary Tory.²

To avoid this fault, Macaulay adopted a device which gave him the opportunity of using his particular gifts

¹ N. W. Wraxall, *History and Posthumous Memoirs*, ed. H. B. Wheatley (5 vols. ; 1884), iii. 225-6.

² *Essays*, ii. 54-5.